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USAID OKARD

USAID Okard, a five-year activity funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), enhances the independence and functional ability of persons with disabilities through equal access to health and social services in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. USAID Okard partners with the Lao government and civil society to develop and implement disability inclusive policies and ensure optimal participation so that no one is left behind.

Persons with disabilities are one of the most marginalized populations. Some of the major causes of disabilities in Laos are unexploded ordnance (UXO), road accidents and increasingly, non-communicable diseases such as Type 2 diabetes and stunting. Equal access to health and social services will foster inclusivity of persons with disabilities in their community and allow them to contribute more effectively to society.

KEY APPROACHES

USAID Okard partners with the public and private sectors to support persons with disabilities in the areas of health, economic empowerment and stakeholder engagement. The activity uses a system-centered approach focusing on government ownership of disability inclusive policies for long-term sustainability and a person-centered approach addressing the individual needs of persons with disabilities and the communities that support them. The project is primarily implemented in Vientiane Capital and the provinces of Xieng Khouang and Savannakhet.

The activity directly addresses the health, livelihoods and social needs of persons with disabilities, using an evidence-based model to demonstrate tangible change in communities and the lives of people with disabilities. This contributes to strengthening government systems and decision-making in support of the National Disability Policy and the National Rehabilitation Strategy.

HEALTH

USAID Okard trains health and rehabilitation service providers, supports health centers to provide assistive products at the local level and promotes rehabilitation as a standard part of healthcare treatment.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

USAID Okard engages with a variety of partners including non-profit associations, government agencies and the private sector to implement inclusive vocational training courses, integrate persons with disabilities into the labor force and provide market-based livelihood opportunities, such as raising livestock.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

USAID Okard assists the Ministry of Health and National Committee for Disabled People and the Elderly to better coordinate organizations and institutions that support persons with disabilities. In addition, the project strengthens disability organizations' ability to work with the Lao government to advance the rights of persons with disabilities, mobilize grassroots networks and to engage persons with disabilities in policy design and implementation.

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

USAID Okard promotes greater economic self-sufficiency, improved functional ability and well-being of persons with disabilities and their households, especially those who have mobility limitations and creating a conducive environment that allows persons with disabilities to participate optimally to the society. As a result of the project:

- Persons with disabilities and their households will have improved access to health and rehabilitation services.
- More people with disabilities and their households will be employed or self-employed.
- Health and economic empowerment improvements will be sustained through stakeholder engagement.

CONTACTS

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